

That California Healing by reddie_or_not

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Richie asks Eddie to move in with him as he heals after Pennywise's attack.

That California Healing

“Do you want to move in with me?”

The question had caught Eddie off guard. He was so used to being ordered around, told what he should be doing, it felt strange to be asked what *he* wanted for once. Right now, Eddie and the rest of the Losers were still in Derry, waiting for him to get the all clear from the Hospital. He'd spent weeks recovering after their encounter with Pennywise, now dead and gone permanently. Richie waited patiently for his answer, ringing his hands nervously although there was no need. Eddie's answer was easy. He'd left Myra for good before heading to Derry, moving to California with his childhood best friend seemed like the logical next step, at least until he was back on his feet. He was exhausted and still in a lot of pain but he agreed, calling Richie a dumbass when he finally let out a long sigh of relief.

Another week later, the doctors deemed Eddie well enough to leave and, as soon as he was able to endure the long flight from Maine to California, they were packing their shit and going home. Eddie absolutely hated flying even when he was completely healthy; he kept his eyes tight shut during takeoff, his hands balled tightly into fists. Thankfully, Richie was amazing and held his hand throughout, distracting him with whatever bullshit came out of his mouth.

“You know, I just realised Bryan Adams was talking about the summer of 1969. I thought he was really having a lot of kinky sex in the summertime.”

“Are clementines and tangerines the same thing? They can't be. But they're all fucking orange, though. They're fucking oranges, man.”

“A fan once asked me what my favourite Pokemon was and I said ‘Baby Spice’. I've never gotten over it.”

Eddie had chuckled several times at Richie's stupid ramblings which did nothing but spur him on, his thumb stroking the back of Eddie's hand. Soon enough, he was drifting off to sleep, Richie's motor mouth becoming background noise. That was until about thirty minutes later when he blurted out something completely random.

“Oh, shit. I didn’t tell you about peanut butter!”

“I’m allergic, Rich,” Eddie mumbled, trying to get back to the dream he’d been enjoying. Richie chuckled.

“My dog, Eds.”

Eddie opened his eyes blearily, raising an eyebrow, “your dog’s name is fucking Peanut Butter?”

“Our dog now, darrrrling,” Richie said with a wink, “you’ll be a great step-dad.”

“Fuck off, asshole,” Eddie chuckled, shaking his head. He settled back to sleep soon after, his head falling rather comfortably onto a more than willing shoulder.

Richie’s home was somehow both everything he expected and nothing like he imagined. It was big, spacious yet cosy and inviting. The thought of Richie spending most of his adult life hear alone made Eddie’s heart ache. Richie was a lovely man, kind and caring even if his mouth did get away from him more often than not. When they arrived, he’d jokingly offered to scoop Eddie into his arms and carry him over the threshold bridal style. If Eddie had been 100% healthy he probably would’ve agreed but instead he feebly elbowed Richie and let him guide him into the house.

Whilst Richie brought in their bags from the car, Eddie had a good look around the living room. There weren’t any personal photos anywhere just several posters from Richie’s various tours. He’d collected rather tacky and curious art and his decorating left little to be desired. It looked like a lounge straight from a nineties sitcom. His couch was huge and squishy, though, and his TV was nearly twice the size as the one he’d had in his old house. He felt he was going to be very comfortable here.

“Right, well, I’ve got some errands to run, grab some food...” Richie was saying as he dropped off the last bag. He picked up his keys and smiled fondly at Eddie, “make yourself at home. There’s a bedroom at the end of the hall there if you get tired. Don’t do anything you can’t

manage until I get back.”

Eddie, however, was gazing wearily at the utterly huge dog bed beside the couch. Was he a bloody St. Bernard? “Where’s Peanut Butter?”

“Oh, Freddy has him at the moment,” Richie said, waving his hand dismissively, “I’ll pick him up later. Is there anything you want me to pick up?”

Freddy? Who the fuck is Freddy? Eddie smiled tightly, “a new personality wouldn’t go amiss.”

“But I love your personality, Eds,” Richie winked, pinching his cheek fondly. He quickly dodged the lame kick Eddie aimed at him.

“I meant you, dickbag.”

Richie laughed, kissing Eddie’s cheek unconsciously before he left the house. For the longest time, Eddie stood staring at the door, wondering what the fuck just happened.

The room Richie had directed him to was lovely. Small, cosy with a stunning view of Beverly Hills. He was tired and gingerly eased himself on top of the soft bed. Eddie was asleep within minutes of his head touching the pillow, still in his clothes as it was still a struggle to dress and undress without assistance. He was having a lovely dream about Richie, just laughing and telling jokes. Being himself. It was bliss. Dream Richie was softly kissing Dream Eddie’s face, nuzzling his neck and making him giggle.

“Riiiiich, cut it out,” Eddie mumbled, still half-asleep and wrapped up in his dream, “y’know what that does to me.”

The kissing didn’t stop and Eddie lazily lifted a hand to bat Richie away, only it connected with something very soft, very wet and very real. He opened his eyes and found a big pair of soft eyes belonging to a large dopey looking Great Dane staring back at him.

“Oh my God,” Eddie nearly screamed, jumping away painfully and wiping furiously at his face. Peanut Butter wagged his tail happily,

attempting to lick Eddie's face again, "no, um, down boy! Go to your room!"

Richie came hurtling into the room, brandishing a spatula. "What the fuck, Eds?"

"Do you have any idea how filthy dogs are, dude?" Eddie said, still desperately trying to wipe his face. Peanut Butter just gazed at him, his tongue hanging out and tail still wagging, "they lick their balls man! And what the fuck are you wearing?"

Richie glanced down at his Kiss the Cook apron in offence, "hey, this is a fashion statement, Eds. I'm making us dinner so you should be thankful. I don't do that for just anyone."

"I am pretty hungry," Eddie conceded, lifting himself out of bed carefully. Richie was at his side in an instant, helping him balance. They half-walked, half-stumbled to the kitchen, Peanut Butter ambling along beside them, "what are we having?"

"Spaghetti."

Richie managed to duck just before the couch cushion hit him in the face.

Eddie hated to admit it but Richie's stupid spaghetti dinner was to die for. The man could cook and he was fucking smug about it, promising to lavish Eddie with all his culinary skills. They were curled up on the couch, watching one of Richie's shitty Netflix specials. About halfway through, Eddie finally plucked up the courage to ask the question that had been eating at him since Richie mentioned it.

"So, um, who's Freddy?" His casual nonchalant question sounded anything but, to Eddie's ears anyway. Richie just shrugged, scooping up another mouthful of spaghetti.

"Just a guy I know."

"Oh," Eddie was anything but reassured and he had no right to be jealous. He wasn't jealous anyway. Just curious. Richie was his best

friend, he was allowed other friends. He was allowed boyfriends. Fucker, “how long have you known him?”

Richie thought about it for a moment, “about six years, I guess. Since I moved in here.”

“What does he look like?”

Eddie could tell his constant questions about Freddy were starting to become suspicious. He just wanted to know everything about the prick, that was all. Perfectly reasonable. Richie was glancing at him curiously, but he still answered the questions.

“Um, he’s short-ish, wears glasses, white hair, quite handsome-”

“Handsome? So you are fucking him?”

Richie nearly choked on the wine he was currently sipping. He was laughing hard and Eddie was mortified, knowing he’d gone too far. He sat there sulking with his arms folded whilst Richie struggled to stop laughing, wiping tears from his eyes.

“Eds...Freddy is my eighty-seven-year-old, very married, very straight next door neighbour. He wears a fucking flat cap and calls me ‘sport’. He has three dogs and takes Peanut Butter when I’m out of town,” he snorted, shaking his head, “fucking jealous dumbass.”

“I wasn’t jealous. Don’t be so fucking full of yourself, asshole,” Eddie said at double speed, a classic sign he was anxious and annoyed. By the look on Richie’s face, he clearly didn’t believe him.

“You were.”

“Fuck you.”

“Jealous.”

The two idiots on the couch just looked at each other, neither of them doing anything about the sudden tension in the room. Peanut Butter watched them for a long time, hoping for something, *anything*. But no. They stubbornly refused to face their feelings, settling back into the rubbish that was playing on the TV as if nothing happened.

This was going to be torturous.

The delicious meal combined with the warm comfort of Richie and Peanut Butter made Eddie feel overwhelmingly tired. It was getting late, anyway, but he was dreading going to bed. Because he needed help. And he was anxious about asking Richie. Eddie knew he'd agree but that did nothing to reassure him. If anything, it made it worse. He couldn't delay it any longer, though, and after spotting Eddie stifling his fourth yawn, Richie switched off the TV and slapped his shoulder.

"Come on, dude, we're both exhausted. I'll help you upstairs."

"I thought my room was down the hall?" Eddie said, taking Richie's hand and allowing himself to be gently pulled upwards.

"That was only temporary. You deserve the best room in the house, good sir," Richie said in yet another one of his stupid voices. Eddie blushed, lightly shoving him.

"Fuck off, man. You don't have to be so nice to me."

Richie didn't say anything else as they gingerly climbed the stairs, stopping every now and then to give Eddie a moment to recover. Once they'd reached the top, Richie led Eddie into a beautiful sizeable bedroom, with an even better view than the one downstairs. It was clearly the master bedroom.

Eddie raised an eyebrow, "you getting ideas, Tozier?"

"I'm not letting you out of my sight again, Kaspbrak," Richie quipped, winking at him. His tone was suddenly serious, "I promised you, I promised myself...I'll never forgive myself if..."

He trailed off and Eddie gazed at him softly, gently reaching out to hold his hand. "There's nothing to worry about anymore, Rich. You've done more than enough for me. I don't know what I've done to deserve you but...I'm grateful."

"That's gay, dude," Richie said after a moment's pause. The tension eased and Eddie laughed.

“Shut up, asshole, and help me change. I can’t do it myself.”

Richie’s brain short-circuited but he nodded, slowly and carefully helping Eddie out of his shirt. Oh, fuck, he was NOT prepared. Even covered in bandages, it was clear Eddie was lean and muscular as fuck. Ripped. Oh, yeah, he was hot. Richie couldn’t help but stare as Eddie rummaged in his suitcase for a pair of pyjamas.

“What the fuck, Eddie?”

Eddie looked around in shock, “what?”

“You have, like, abs!” Richie gestured wildly, his stupid gay brain unable to come up with anything more intelligent, “at our fucking age! And the tattoos...”

“Yeah, I guess?” Eddie replied, unsure of what else he should say. He tossed the pyjamas to Richie who let them fall on the floor unnoticed, still staring at Eddie.

“What the fuck...”

Eddie suddenly felt self-conscious and rubbed his arm, “well, I don’t know what to tell you. I work out a lot.”

“You’re hot as shit, man, that’s not fair,” Richie sighed, quickly picking up the pyjamas, reluctantly helping Eddie ease into them. Eddie just looked confused, his brow furrowing cutely.

“...I’m sorry?”

“Fuck you, you’re not sorry,” Richie mumbled, working on getting Eddie out of his pants. He’d imagined this very scenario a thousand times, never once under these circumstances. He shook his head, forcing himself not to think about exactly what it was he was doing, “god, I need to get laid.”

“Well, don’t look at me, dipshit. I’m incapacitated,” Eddie chuckled although he didn’t sound all that convincing. Richie clearly sensed it, too. He smirked cheekily.

“What about when you’re healthy?” Eddie stared at him, his mouth

suddenly very dry. Before he could say anything, Richie stood up, grinning, "I could always try Freddy next door."

Eddie stepped closer, then, leaning up to press a deep kiss to Richie's mouth. The comedian froze, itching to pull Eddie closer but still very conscious of his fragile state, not to mention the bandages spanning his chest. Eddie was positively smug when he pulled away to admire the mess that was formerly Richie Tozier.

"When I'm healthy, you can do whatever you like to me."

Richie swallowed, his tongue suddenly far too heavy in his mouth. He nodded and quickly disrobed himself, flinging himself in bed beside Eddie. He cuddled up to him and murmured into his ear. "You did that on purpose, you bastard."

Eddie fell asleep with a smile on his face for the first time in nearly thirty years.

It didn't take long for a Richie and Eddie to fall into some sort of a routine. Richie would go to work, Eddie would exercise, getting his strength back slowly, Richie would get home and they'd spend the afternoon together. As Eddie got stronger, he often joined Richie when he took Peanut Butter for walks, balancing on crutches next to them. Richie helped him change his bandages, always commenting on his stunning physique as he did so. And Eddie would, without fail, blush every time. They slept in the same bed every night, more often than not waking up intimately pressed against each other. There was an unspoken tension between them that neither wanted to address. Eddie would find himself staring at Richie more often than usual, noting the way his glasses framed his face and made his eyes look beautiful. Richie, however, was struggling to keep a lid on how much he truly loved Eddie. The first time he saw Eddie's reading glasses, he nearly threw himself out of the window.

It also took a long time for Eddie to regain his confidence in himself after years spent living with Myra. He often asked Richie for permission to do things, out of habit. Richie had willingly surrendered his Netflix account which terrified Eddie; Myra kept their old account under lock and key, always having to approve the

content Eddie viewed. Richie had returned home one evening to find Eddie crying over *Queer Eye* - he'd babbled that he'd never seen it before and he hadn't realised people could be so nice and accepting. Richie had spent the whole evening watching episodes with Eddie and soothing him when it became too overwhelming. Eddie often returned the favour, though. He knew for a while Richie had been struggling with his comedy, since it became clear his routines weren't funny because they weren't written by him. Eddie offered to help Richie write his own material and it was going well. One night, Richie was brainstorming ideas for his show and Eddie was genuinely in hysterics.

"You cannot name your show *Coming From the Bottom!*"

"Why not?"

"It's a bit on the nose, dude."

"Fuck you. This is the first time I'm genuinely me!" Richie rubbed his arm self consciously, reading over the notes he'd taken, "like, I'm writing me. For once."

"And I like you!" Eddie insisted, holding Richie's hand supportively, "stop thinking about it so much. Your best material is natural. Trust me."

Richie smiled. He was so fucking gone for Eddie it was ridiculous. He was getting dangerously close to confessing his long held feelings. He couldn't help but notice they were still holding hands, "thanks, Eds."

Eddie was nearly fully mended, his bandages would be coming off in a few days. He should probably start finding somewhere else to live. He didn't want to, but he had to. Richie sure as hell wouldn't want to be burdened with him the rest of his life. Unless he did? They'd been getting on amazingly since they'd been living together. Sure, they bickered and teased each other but that was what they did. It was heaven. These conflicting thoughts were currently keeping Eddie awake. He tossed and turned, glancing at the empty spot next to him. Richie had wanted to stay up to get on with his writing; Eddie didn't want to admit he was having a hard time falling asleep without him.

They'd been doing it so long, he'd gotten used to it. He was just beginning to nod off when he heard strange noises coming from outside the window. It sounded like someone was panting and wheezing right outside. Panicking, Eddie grabbed the closest thing at hand - his inhaler - and staggered over to the window, throwing open the curtains. Richie was hanging onto the window ledge, breathing heavily and sweating profusely.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

Richie tried to pull himself into the room, failing dramatically. He dangled limply, offering a weak smile, "I-I thought I'd...sneak in... like we- we used to do when we were kids..." Eddie rolled his eyes and held back a giggle, helping Richie haul himself through the window. The comedian doubled over, hands on his knees as he struggled to breathe, "fuck, that was a lot easier when we were thirteen."

"What did you do that for, you idiot?"

Richie took Eddie's inhaler weapon and took several puffs. He stood up straight, ruffling his messy hair, "I wanted to surprise you. Be, you know, romantic and shit," he pulled a bunch of rather dishevelled looking flowers from his back pocket, handing them to Eddie with a smirk.

"Why, Richie Tozier, are you trying to seduce me?"

"Is it working?"

Eddie pulled him into a tight hug, pouring everything he could into the touch, "I'm not fucking you whilst I still look like a mummy," he broke the hug, sliding his hands down Richie's arms to hold his hands, "like I said you can do whatever you want to me when I'm healthy. Nothing's changed."

Richie nodded, a lump forming in his throat, "That's good to know."

They settled into their night routine, then, sleeping closer together than normal if that was possible.

The day finally came for Eddie to have his bandages removed. He'd kept it a secret from Richie, wanting to surprise him. He'd been at work so it was easy for him to slip out and get the all clear from the Hospital that he was perfectly fit and healthy. On some level, Eddie knew that meant his time living with Richie was nearly up. He didn't want to think about that. He waited for Richie to finish work, the sitcom *Friends* playing in the background. When Richie finally arrived, he found Eddie clutching a pillow, Peanut Butter's head in his lap and raging at the TV.

"Why the fuck would ANYONE get off a plane for Ross fucking Geller?" He gesticulated wildly, almost throwing the pillow. Peanut Butter took no notice - the two of them had gotten much closer the longer Eddie had spent living with them, "give up their DREAM JOB? In *PARIS*?"

"I can't believe you've never seen it before, dude," Richie chuckled, tossing his keys onto the side. He fussed over Peanut Butter as Eddie huffed, folding his arms.

"Myra said it was too promiscuous. That it wasn't realistic," he sulked, pouting at the TV screen, "whatever, it's bullshit writing anyway. That's not a healthy relationship. And I should know."

"I love you man, but seriously it's just a TV show," Richie vaulted the sofa, flopping unceremoniously beside Eddie. He just stared at him, in awe but mainly realisation.

"You really do, don't you?"

Richie frowned, his mouth full of stale popcorn, "huh?"

"You love me."

Richie's eyes widened and he swallowed nervously, "fuck..."

Twenty seven years. Twenty seven *fucking* YEARS hard work keeping that secret, suffering in silence, down the fucking drain. All thanks to Eddie fucking Kaspbrak and his stupid fucking Disney princess eyes. Eddie smiled lovingly at Richie taking his hand and pressing a kiss to his knuckles.

“I love you too, asshole.”

Slowly, he guided Richie's hand beneath his shirt, allowing him to feel the fresh lack of bandages. Richie's eyes widened, his fingers gently spreading across the soft warm, healed skin. As if a switch had been flicked, Richie leapt from the couch and, before Eddie knew it, he was being dragged upstairs and into their bedroom. Peanut Butter didn't dare follow them.

The following morning, Richie woke up first and he found himself just staring at Eddie as he slept. He was on cloud nine. His brain wouldn't quiet, like an excited child on Christmas morning. The love of his life reciprocated his feelings and they'd spent the night together. The mood hadn't even been spoiled by Eddie insisting on having a shower first, since he hadn't been able to when his bandages were on. Richie had just sat there, waiting for either Eddie to return or to wake up from what was clearly a dream. But it hadn't been a dream. Eddie came back, wrapped in a towel with steam billowing from his body. He'd been self conscious about his scarring to begin with but as soon as Richie kissed him, lavishing attention across his sensitive skin, it became natural. He carefully collected his glasses, trying not to disturb Eddie and put them on. Eddie came into clear view, still sleeping. He was so lovely. Richie couldn't wipe the smile off of his face.

“Fucking weirdo,” Eddie mumbled, not quite ready to open his eyes. He yawned, “do you always watch me sleep like a creeper?”

Richie laughed, snuggling closer to his...whatever he was now, “I've literally had your dick in my mouth and this is where you draw the line?”

“I didn't dream that, then?” Eddie mumbled, finally opening his eyes. Richie looked a ducking mess which was mostly down to Eddie.

“No.”

“Shame,” Eddie said with a mock sigh, unable to stop the smirk on his face. Richie shook his head, too happy to fire back an insult. Instead, he burrowed closer like a hamster, wrapping his arms

around Eddie's waist. He felt the shorter man's fingers curl into his hair, stroking lightly, "Rich...?"

Richie wanted to respond to the sleepy mumble with some lovesick nickname: yes, my love? Anything my dear. Whatever you need, angel. Instead he said, "wassup, Spaghetti?"

He didn't say anything and Richie looked up curiously; Eddie was biting his lip anxiously, avoiding his gaze, "I'm...healthy, aren't I? I can manage on my own now."

"I did notice," Richie said with a smirk, quite unsure as to what Eddie was getting at. He shifted uncomfortably, still unable to look Richie in the eye.

"Maybe I should, um, look for my own place?"

Richie's heart sank. Eddie was lying next to him, naked and sexy, and he still wanted to move out? He couldn't really blame him, on some level he knew this wouldn't last. Eddie was a free and single man, he was alive and hot, why shouldn't he want to take advantage of that? He nodded slowly, rolling onto his back to pout at the ceiling.

"Yeah, yeah..." he took a deep breath, his heart pounding. Fuck it, it was now or never, "or-"

"Yes?"

He looked back at Eddie who was staring at him hopefully. Richie's confidence soared and he smiled, pushing his glasses up his nose, "or you could, like, stay?"

Eddie broke into a large grin. He looked like his thirteen year old self again and Richie's heart melted; oh, yeah, he could get used to this, "really?"

"Yeah, I mean..." he sat up, ruffling his wild post-sex and sleep hair, "we're, like, really great friends and co-habit...nicely and shit," he felt like he was asking his Mom if he could go out and play with his friends. Richie took his hand, tracing his thumb across the back of Eddie's hand, "and, you know, we love each other, bro."

Eddie shook his head, laughing freely; this was the dumbass he fell in love with, “yeah, we do. *Bro.*”

"And the sex-"

“Don’t ruin it, asshole.”

They stayed in bed for a long time, just holding each other and discussing their plans for the future. They soon set their plans into motion. Eddie moved in officially, he took Peanut Butter out for walks, waving at Freddy every morning as he passed. And if they happened to get engaged only a few days later, none of the Losers complained. If anything, they were surprised it hadn’t been sooner.